

Yellowstone Presbytery

Child and Youth Protection Policy(CP)

Based on Safe Church Guidelines and PCUSA Child Protection Policy (DRAFT 5/31/18)(To be Deleted)

Adopted June __, 2018

CP01. General Purpose Statement

Yellowstone Presbytery seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children of Yellowstone Presbytery from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers from false accusations.

Policy Rationale

Children and youth are a gift from God and the Church has a divine mandate to provide for their safety and nurturing. In Matthew 19:14, Jesus says, "Let the little children come to me." The Church is called to be, at all levels and in all entities, a place of safety and nurture reflective of the arms of Christ. It is the call of the Church to be a life-giving entity of Christ's healing and hope for community and individuals. The Church, as the body of Christ, is to be the presence of Christ's love, in the same way taking up all children and youth into its arms and blessing them, providing for them a safe, thriving, and nurturing environment in which to grow in every way.

The Book of Order states, "The congregation as a whole, on behalf of the Church universal, assumes responsibility for nurturing the baptized person in the Christian life," and Presbyterians believe this baptismal commitment to be a serious one, understanding it to apply to all in the church's care, including children and youth. (Book of Order W-2.3013).

CP02. Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms "child" or "children" include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term "worker" includes both paid and unpaid persons who work with children. The term "volunteer" means anyone involved in a Sunday school program, summer camp, youth retreat, Vacation Bible School, church nursery, church youth group and/or in overnight activities involving minors, in counseling of minors, or in one-on-one mentoring of minors.

CP03. Selection of Workers

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

CP03.1 Six Month Rule

No person will be considered for any volunteer position involving contact with minors until she/he has been involved with a Yellowstone Presbytery Church for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children. Exception: the applicant can provide documentation that they have been vetted by an internship program or previous children and youth ministry/ services setting.

CP03.02 Written Application

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous affiliation a Yellowstone Presbytery congregation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at the supervising church or other Yellowstone Presbytery entity to include Westminster Spires Camp.

CP03.03 Personal Interview

Upon completion of the application, an interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

CP03.04 Reference Checks

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicants' references will be checked. These references should be of an institutional nature as opposed too personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at the supervising church or at the Yellowstone Presbytery office in the case of Westminster Spires camp.

CP03.05 Criminal Background Check

- a. A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and volunteers".
- b. Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing the church or Yellowstone Presbytery to run the check.

CP03.06 Disqualification

- a. A disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the local church pastor or designee or camp director on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.
- b. The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at the supervising church or Yellowstone Presbytery office.

CP 04. RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE

Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at the supervising church or camp becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the head pastor in the case of church activities, and the Presbyter of Yellowstone Presbytery for purposes of this policy, "child abuse" is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- CP04.01 **Physical abuse** – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- CP04.02 **Emotional abuse** – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- CP04.03 **Sexual abuse** – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- CP04.04 **Neglect** – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.
- CP04.05 **Spires Camp**--in the case of Westminster Spires or Presbytery wide events for further action, including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law. (See CP 05.)

CP 05. REPORTING

If there is suspicion that any incident of child abuse has taken place, an Incident Report should be completed and forwarded to the supervising adult of the activity or event. Incident Report forms are available on the presbytery website.

All Incident Reports are to be given to the Head Pastor of the church sponsoring the activity or events or the supervising adult of the activity if it is a Yellowstone Presbytery sponsored event such as a youth retreat or summer camp activity.

The supervising adult of the activity or event will consult with the head pastor of the church or the Yellowstone Presbytery presbyter and one other adult related to the activity or event to address the following: The pastor / General Presbyter and one adult involved in the activity form the response team.

CP 05.01 Immediately provide for the safety of the alleged victim(s) involved.

CP 05.02 If the report alleges abuse or harassment of a minor, the response team will:

- a. immediately ensure the allegation is reported to the civil authorities under state law;
- b. immediately notify the parents or guardian of the minor;
- c. notify the insurance company of the allegation and that no investigation has yet occurred.

CP 05.03 Make immediate decisions concerning the temporary removal of the individual accused from any contact with children or youth pending an investigation and/or removal of the accused from the event until a resolution of the allegations has occurred.

CP 05.04 Provide victims and their families immediate resources that may aid in the particular spiritual, psychological, or emotional needs and trauma that arise from the devastation of abuse.

CP 05.05 If the report is against a teaching elder, the response team shall send a written statement of allegation to the stated clerk Yellowstone Presbytery. This written statement of allegation shall trigger the formation of an investigating committee under the Rules of Discipline of the Book of Order: The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Part II.

CP 05.06 If the report is against a ruling elder, the response team will notify the session of membership that an allegation of offense has been received against an elder that triggers the formation of an investigating committee under the Rules of Discipline of the Book of Order: The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Part II.

CP 05.07 If the report is against an employee of Yellowstone Presbytery the response team will notify the person(s) or committee responsible for supervision of the employee. The response team will request a follow-up report from the supervisory body of the outcome of any subsequent investigation or discipline.

CP 05.08 If the report is against an employee of sponsoring council or entity other than Yellowstone Presbytery, the response team will notify the person(s) or committee responsible for supervision of the employee. The response team will request a follow-up report from the supervisory body of the outcome of any subsequent investigation or discipline.

CP 05.09 If the report is against a volunteer, or nonmember of Yellowstone Presbytery, the response team will request that Yellowstone Presbytery appoint an investigating committee of three persons to initiate an investigation of the allegations in order to:

- a. gather any statements of abuse from those making the report, including any information from the Response Team, and any party to the abuse;
- b. gather any information from the person who was accused of abuse;
- c. make written determinations and take actions appropriate to resolve the matter including, but not limited to, making recommendations for prevention as well as response.

CP 05.10 Provide pastoral counseling for the principal parties involved (accuser(s), possible victim(s),

accused, family members).

CP 05.11 A written summary of any proceedings in such cases will be maintained by the local church session, reported and a file maintained by to the stated clerk of Yellowstone Presbytery.

CP 05.12 Any person bringing a report of abuse or assisting in investigating will not be adversely affected in terms and conditions of employment, church membership or affiliation, or otherwise discriminated against or discharged.

CP 06. EVENT RULES

CP 06.01 **Two-adult rule:** Whenever possible two non-related adults should always be present in groups of children and youth. It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some youth classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open.

CP 06.02 **Ratios:** The adult to child ratio for all child-related events/activities is 2:10. The adult to youth ratio for all youth-related events/activities is 2:17. When possible one adult of each gender when there are one or more minors of each gender in a group. In some situations, it is understood that the ratios and gender diversity may be compromised.

CP 06.03 **View Windows and Open Doors:** When minors and adult workers or volunteers are in a room, if the door is closed, the door must have a view window installed. If no view window is installed in the door, the door must remain open while the room is occupied.

CP 06.04 **Adult workers/caregivers** should respect the privacy of the children to whom they provide care. Responsible use of digital devices and cell phones is required in all situations (ex. Taking age appropriate photographs and movies, not taking photographs of minors who are not fully clothed. Adults and minors are required at all times to wear appropriate attire.

CP 06.05 **Age appropriate training** to children and youth should be provided regarding behavior that should be reported to caregiver or leader of the event.

CP 06.06 **Transportation:** All adult drivers at child/youth events must have proper licensure and insurance on file with the organizing council. No minor under eighty-five pounds may sit in the front seat of any vehicle. All drivers transporting minors and vulnerable adults must be over the age of twenty-five and must be informed that if their vehicle is used, their insurance would be primary if an accident occurs. If a charter bus is rented, or any outside carrier is contracted, the company hired must ensure criminal background checks on their drivers. Each vehicle must follow the ratio rules noted in point 2 in this section. Lastly, no minor may be a driver at any event or activity (this includes golf carts at events).

CP 06.07 **Forms:** The legal guardians of each minor must provide the appropriate health and food allergy information and medical insurance information for each activity/event. The information form should include all contacts for parents and/or legal guardians. Further consent forms must be signed by legal guardians for any off campus events. Any photos at the event that are used in social media or published material by the organizing council must be released by a signed consent form from a participant's legal guardian as well as the minor. All such forms must be stored at the event site, in a secure place with restricted access.

CP 06.08 **Each event/activity** must ensure that rules are gone over with participants at each event/activity. These rules shall include but are not limited to a code of conduct specific to the event/activity, as well as a list prohibited and expected behaviors for the specific event/activity. The code of conduct and prohibited and expected behaviors list should be given in written form to each participant and legal guardians, as well as discussed thoroughly at the beginning of the event/activity.

CP 06.09 **All volunteers and employees** at any Yellowstone Presbytery sponsored events must also abide by a code of conduct that emphasizes the following prohibited behaviors. Some of these prohibited behaviors include but are not restricted to:

- a. Display of sexual affection toward a child.
- b. Use of profanity or off-color jokes.
- c. Discussion of sexual encounters with or around children or in any way involving children in personal problems or issues.
- d. Dating or becoming “romantically” involved with children (under the age of eighteen).
- e. Using or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs in the presence of children.
- f. Possessing sexually oriented materials—including printed or online pornography—on church property or property being utilized for a church event.
- g. Having secrets with youth/children.
- h. Staring at or commenting on children’s bodies.
- i. Engaging in inappropriate or unapproved electronic communication with children.
- j. Working one-on-one with children in a private setting.
- k. Abusing youth/children in anyway, including (but not limited to) the following:
 - Physical abuse: hit, spank, shake, slap, unnecessarily restraint.
 - Verbal abuse: degrade, threaten, or curse.
 - Sexual abuse: inappropriately touch, expose oneself, or engage in sexually oriented conversations.
 - Mental abuse: shame, humiliate, act cruelly.
 - Neglect: withhold food, water, shelter.
 - Permit children or youth to engage in the following: hazing, bullying, derogatory name calling, ridicule, humiliation, or sexual activity.

CP 07. **Teenage Workers**

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for babysitters (paid or volunteer) who are under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to teenage workers:

- a. *Are preferably* at least age 14.
- b. Must be screened as specified above.
- c. Must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.

CP 08. **Check-in/Check-out Procedure**

For Large Churches: For children below third grade, a security check-in/check-out procedure will be followed. The child will be signed in by a parent or guardian, who will receive a “child check” for the child similar to a claim check. The parent or guardian must present the “child check” in order to sign out the child from our care. In the event that a parent or guardian is unable to present the “child check,” the supervising adult (VBS director, Sunday school teach, camp director, etc.) will be contacted. For all churches: the supervising adult will be responsible for releasing the child to the care of a parent or guardian as appropriate to the surrounding circumstance.

CP 09. Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children participating in all Yellowstone Presbytery church sponsored events. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off:

- a. Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours;
- b. Green or yellow runny nose;
- c. Eye or skin infections; and/or
- d. Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease.

Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

CP 10. Medications Policy

It is the policy of Yellowstone Presbytery to not administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. Parents are reminded of our sick child policy. In the case of young people attending camp or overnight youth retreat events, a supervising adult may be provided written guidelines and approval for securing and administering medications.

CP 11. Discipline Policy

It is the policy of Yellowstone Presbytery and member churches to not to administer corporal punishment. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with the supervising adult of the activity or event if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

CP 12. Restroom Guidelines

Children five years of age and younger should use a classroom bathroom if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, workers should escort a group of children to the hallway bathroom. They should always go in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone. The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside. The workers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom door, and leave the stall door open as they assist the child.

For the protection of all, workers should *never* be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

CP 13. Accidental Injuries to Children

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

- a. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
- b. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be notified in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
- c. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

CP 14. Social Media—Electronic Communications

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CP 14.01 **General Social Media Policy**—No minister, employee, contractor, or volunteer of *Yellowstone Presbytery* and its entities shall create or use a media site (Web, Facebook, YouTube, or similar) in the name of or purporting to represent *Yellowstone Presbytery* without the explicit written permission of *Yellowstone Presbytery*, or event leadership. When clergy or staff, acting in their capacity as a representative of *Yellowstone Presbytery* or its entities, lead or coordinate a group activity using social media, each may use only official *Yellowstone Presbytery* entity sites/channels when they have been made available by the entity of *Yellowstone Presbytery*. These may include Web pages, Facebook, e-mail, and similar means.

CP 14.02 **Social Networking Code of Conduct**

Each person who leads using the resources of social media shall apply this Social Networking Code of Conduct:

- a. Prohibits comments that are, or could be construed by any observer, to be harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.
- b. *Prohibits use of profanity or off-color jokes.*
- c. *Prohibit conversations that could be construed as flirtatious or romantic.*
- d. Prohibits sexually bit oriented conversations or discussions about sexual activities.
- e. Prohibits inappropriate private messages between employees and volunteers and children or youth.
- f. Prohibits posting inappropriate pictures (for example, sexually suggestive, exploitive, or voyeuristic) or inappropriate comments on pictures.
- g. Provides children, youth, and their parents with this Social Networking Code of Conduct.
- h. Encourages parents to play a role in monitoring their children's and youth interactions with employees and volunteers.
- i. Continuously reminds children and youth how to interact appropriately through social networking sites.
- j. Denies participation by individuals who repeatedly violate the code of conduct.
- k. At the institution of the use of social media, the authorized minister shall present this Social Networking Code of Conduct to children or youth and parents/guardians.

CP 15. **Training**

The sponsoring church or *Yellowstone Presbytery* sponsored event director will provide training on this child protection policy to all new childcare workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All workers are strongly encouraged to attend these training events.

CP 16. **Supporting Documents:**

Yellowstone Presbytery Application for Staff Working With Youth

Yellowstone Presbytery Incident Report (To report injury or possible abuse incident)

Yellowstone Presbytery Authorization for Request for Criminal Records Check

Westminster Spires Camp Staff Application (Separate document)

CP 17. **Amended:**

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